

**Global Symposium for Regulators (GSR):**  
**Spotlight on Effective Enablers**

**Opening Address by Hamadoun Touré**  
**Director, ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT)**

Distinguished Guests, Minister Angela Montoya Holguin of Colombia, Minister Nyana Mphafi of Lesotho, Minister Clement Stambuli of Malawi, Minister Jean Pastorelli of Monaco, Minister Dan Nica of Romania, Secretary-General Yoshio Utsumi, Deputy Secretary-General Roberto Blois, Radiocommunication Bureau Director Robert Jones, Distinguished Chairmen, Directors General and Presidents of the Regulatory Authorities, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my greatest pleasure to welcome you to the second annual Global Symposium for Regulators. As I look out at this distinguished audience, I am delighted to welcome back many of you who joined us at the first global gathering of regulators last year, the Development Symposium for Regulators, which marked a watershed for ITU and the BDT. We are very happy to have you with us again this year. I am equally pleased to welcome many new faces to the Symposium. Many, many new faces!

Last year marked the first time that regulators and policy makers from all four corners of the globe united to launch a global dialogue. As remarkable as that event was, this meeting is even more astonishing. At last count, we had registered more than 55 directors general, chairmen, presidents and board members from regulatory authorities, and the participation of at least 97 countries. Such a gathering would have been unimaginable just a few short years ago. Indeed, your presence is a true testament to how the world of telecommunications has changed.

If we were to have held this meeting in 1999 we would have been hard pressed to attract as many countries with regulatory authorities. A total of 84 countries had established a regulatory body at that time. We would have had to attract every one of them. Today at least 112 countries have established a regulatory body. And the vast majority of these are represented in this room. Perhaps even more astonishing is where these regulators come from. Eighty per cent of the regulators in existence today are from developing or least developed countries. Regulation, clearly, is a development issue.

And this makes perfect sense. The telecommunication sector is evolving into a broader "information and communication technology" (ICT) sector that includes elements of telecommunication, broadcasting and computing. The ICT sector is seen not only as an economic engine, but also an enabler of social, educational and medical progress. The importance of access to ICT systems has grown accordingly. It is for this reason that

national and international policy makers are harnessing their energy to transform the digital divide into a digital opportunity. Of course, the ITU has a long-term commitment to improving universal service to telecommunications services. As the telecommunications sector evolves into the ICT sector, we are leading the effort to bridge the digital divide. This goal forms the core of the BDT mandate.

The majority of ITU Member States now recognize that sector reform is the bedrock on which digital divide initiatives rests. Perhaps the most fundamental task of ICT sector reform is to establish an effective and transparent regulatory authority. Many governments have created regulatory entities in recent years, either as separate agencies or as functional units within government ministries or offices. Many more are planning to create regulatory bodies in the near future (more than 35). For governments, much is at stake in these efforts. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that more than half of the recognized regulatory bodies directly represent their country at the ITU, 57 at last count. In addition, four regulators are ITU sector members. This is a testimonial to the importance of the ITU as a neutral platform for regulators to converge and share and benchmark their experiences.

Competition in the ICT sector has fueled the skyrocketing rise in the number of mobile subscribers and Internet users worldwide. But competition cannot, by itself, achieve all social or economic objectives ICTs promise to bring. Competition is just one important element of a comprehensive strategy for economic and social development. Nor can market forces by themselves ensure fair competition in most ICT markets in the world today. Regulators must increasingly take an active role to ensure that vital building blocks of competition, such as interconnection and resale, are provided in a fair and transparent fashion. At the same time, regulators must develop enforceable universal service programs that bring networks and affordable services to rural and urban populations alike.

That is why BDT devoted this year to the study of effective regulatory authorities. Effective regulation is the theme of this year's Global Symposium for Regulators and the theme of the annual BDT report, *Trends in Telecommunication Reform*. Effective regulation was also the theme of a series of five case studies BDT conducted around the globe this year. The case studies are perhaps the most comprehensive reports on regulatory authorities published to date. They focus on key issues including the sequence of the sector reform process in each country studied, regulatory powers and mandate, transparency in the decision-making process, staffing and financing of regulatory authorities.

We'll be taking a closer look at the Effective Regulation Case Studies this afternoon, and are delighted that the heads of the five regulatory authorities we studied, Botswana, Brazil, Morocco, Peru and Singapore have honored us with their presence today.

Tomorrow, we'll be taking a close look at the *Trends* report. Each of the authors will present his or her findings, and we have developed a series of distinguished panels that will explore the themes of our report in greater detail. *Trends* is based not only on the independent research of the authors, but also the invaluable information we gathered as part of our case studies and the annual regulatory survey we conduct each year. We learned so much from you, from the regulatory authorities examined in the case studies, and from those of you who faithfully respond to our survey each year. I would like to thank all of you for your help in our work, and am pleased that we are able to host an event like this in which we can share our work with the very broad community of regulators and policy makers.

One of the most fundamental lessons we learned this year is that regulators are much more than referees ensuring fair competition—although that role is central to their mandate. More than referees, they are enablers, promoters, and developers.

In many ways regulators are like a lighthouse shining a path of light into a safe and prosperous harbor. They provide a signal that their market has the security of clear investment rules applied in a fair and transparent fashion. Although regulators themselves do not ply the waters of trade and commerce or operate the “shipping lanes” of ICT networks and services, or sell products or services to customers, they, like a lighthouse, create a climate conducive to enabling those that do to conduct their business. They enable networks to be rolled out, new services to be launched, create new job opportunities and ensure that customers are satisfied. It is for this reason that we have selected the image of a lighthouse for our cover of the latest edition of *Trends in Telecommunication Reform*.

Like regulators, we in the BDT aim our efforts at customer satisfaction, including responding to your requests. Last year, the Development Symposium for Regulators backed a 4-point action plan to continue the global dialogue among regulators. Part of that plan called for annual global regulators' meetings. That request is the basis for this year's Global Symposium for Regulators. It is clear that our Global Symposia for Regulators have responded to a need that up until last year had gone unanswered. The ever-growing number of regulatory authorities in developed and developing countries have a great thirst for sharing their views and experiences. BDT has tapped a well to quench your very real thirst. Rest assured that we have already factored a third annual Global Symposium for Regulators into our operational plan for next year.

You also asked that BDT provide an on-line forum and regulators' hotline to provide a venue for further exchange of views and experiences among regulators and policy makers. As many of you know, we rose to the challenge and launched the Global Regulators' Exchange (G-REX) on 8 May. Since its launch, G-REX has grown in popularity. We'll be offering the regulators and policy makers who participate in G-REX an opportunity on Wednesday to provide their recommendations on how we can shape this useful vehicle in the future to better serve your needs.

I also know that many of you have come to this meeting armed with further proposals to enhance the services we provide to those of you on the front lines of sector reform. I can assure you that BDT is ready to rise to the challenge and to work with you. We are confident that our efforts to help regulators and policy makers will help meet the goal of improving universal service and bridging the digital divide.

I would also like to extend this challenge to those of you in the audience from the private sector that we invited to participate in today's session. One of the valuable lessons we learned from our work this year is that regulators do not operate in a vacuum, but work closely with partners, including the private sector. Like the regulators, BDT too needs partners to enhance its range of regulatory products and services. We look to you to make proposals on how you can join our valuable work.

In fact, we look to all of you to help us to develop our future work plan to better meet your needs. Of course, we are all planning for the Plenipotentiary Conference next September. But first we will host the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC) in Istanbul, Turkey from 18-27 March. This Conference will set the work plan of the BDT for the next four years. I am delighted that Fatih Mehmet Yurdal, President of the Turkish Regulatory Authority, who will serve as Chairman of the WTDC, is here with us for this Symposium. Mr. Yurdal has been a great supporter of our work, participating in this Symposium, and is a very active G-REX moderator and contributor. For all of this, I wish to say thank you.

I would also like to invite all of you to come forward with proposals for the WTDC to help shape our future work programme. ITU Administrations and ITU-D Sector Members are invited to submit their proposals by 8 January 2002. We will also be listening to your proposals this Wednesday. The Chairman's Report from this Symposium will also be provided as a contribution to the WTDC. If you would like to make a written proposal for our Wednesday session, you are invited to do so.

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, I don't want to take any more of your valuable time. We have very important issues to discuss. And our learning process continues. I would now like to turn the remainder of this meeting over to you, the regulators and policy makers, so we can continue to learn from you and respond to your urgent needs.

Thank you very much.